

YLAI Network Pitch Perfect Toolkit Network

Vlai state gov/entrepreneurship

Welcome to the YLAI
Network Pitch Perfect
Toolkit focused on helping
you market your business
through developing your
own pitch!

A pitch is a presentation used to educate others about what your business or entrepreneurial endeavor aims to accomplish, typically with the goal of forming a partnership or securing an investment. It can be informal or formal and can be presented to a variety of audiences. Have you already developed a pitch? Don't worry; this toolkit will help you to refine the work that you have already done and help make your pitch stronger.

Complete the activities in this toolkit to help you master the art of pitching your business to potential investors, partners, employees or others. Share your experience on social media using the hashtag #YLAIPitchPerfect to let other YLAI Network members know you found your voice!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

# Checklist to Design the Perfect Pitch

Section 1: Storytelling	4
$\ \square$ Determine what you have to tell	
☐ Create your memorable statement	
☐ Put your story together	
Section 2: Public Speaking	7
☐ Engage your audience	
☐ Use effective verbal and	
nonverbal communication	
Section 3: Quick or Informal Pitches	9
Section 3: Quick or Informal Pitches  Informal pitch practice activity	9
	9
☐ Informal pitch practice activity	
☐ Informal pitch practice activity  Section 4: Formal Pitches	
☐ Informal pitch practice activity  Section 4: Formal Pitches  ☐ Formal pitch quiz	



# Storytelling

The first step of a perfect pitch starts well before making a presentation, or even speaking to another person. First you must reflect on your goals, including identifying your story and deciding how to tell it. This section will help guide you to determine what your story is and how you should tell it.

### Determine what you have to tell

Before you can tell your story, you have to decide what you want people to know. The prompts below will help you identify the important information for your story. The goal for this exercise is to answer each question as concisely as possible, so take your time and challenge yourself to **limit your answers to one sentence per section**.

nple: My name is Charlie; I earned my degree in business from University, have worked in business for ears, and am the CEO of BizCompany.
nple: BizCompany focuses on helping other businesses more effectively market their message to potential omers online or through traditional means.
nple: Our clients approach BizCompany when they are releasing a new product and need to make their
omers aware of the new offering.
nple: We can be contacted directly via our website, and after initial contact we will work with businesses erson at their organization's headquarters to plan and execute the marketing approach.
nple: BizCompany doesn't just help businesses market; we donate time each month helping market local ts to encourage more people to attend and build community.
<u> </u>
nple: BizCompany works step-by-step with our clients from the idea phase to execution, providing appropriate ments and recommendations along the way.
nple: Growing up I had a lemonade stand, and I was always curious about how I could get more people to buy emonade, so when I grew up I started BizCompany to help other companies sell their "lemonade."

### Create your memorable statement

Now that you have your thoughts about your business written, it is time to create what may be the most important part of your story: the memorable statement.

When telling your story, it is important to place emphasis on one memorable statement. This statement should refer to the main points of your story. If someone remembers nothing else from your story but this statement, he or she would still have a clear understanding of your business and why it deserves support.

If you need help articulating the problem your business aims to solve, check out the <u>YLAI Entrepreneurship Toolkit</u> for tools and activities to help you better understand your business and how to make it successful.

Now it is time to create your statement! Keep in mind that the best statements:

- Are clear and concise. Use no more than one sentence.
- Separate your business from others. Draw from the "Why is your business unique?" and "What is your business?" sections on the previous page.
- **Detail the importance of your business.** Draw from the section on the previous page about "passion." Explain how your business can help others.

#### Here is a sample of what the YLAI Network's memorable statement might look like:

The YLAI Network is a vibrant community of young entrepreneurs and changemakers from Latin America and the Caribbean committed to building connections, sharing ideas and changing the world through entrepreneurial endeavors.

Now it's your turn! Craft your memorable statement on the lines below:			

## **Putting your story together**

Now that you have written the background pieces, it is time to put them together to form a compelling story that can help guide you to more effectively speak about yourself and your business.

After completing the activities on the previous two pages you should have eight sentences—seven from activity one, plus your memorable statement. Your challenge in this activity is to transform all of your answers into a clear and concise story that is powerful and easy for you to tell. You will want to include parts from each of your seven answers and your memorable statement.

For each prompt below, focus on what makes your story engaging. Engaging stories are often relatable, emotional, tangible, memorable, surprising or practical. Consider how you can tell someone what your business does and how it delivers products in one sentence instead of two; consider if you really want to focus attention on the history of your company or on your services.

Write your story below in no more than five sentences:				
Now, write your story below in no more than three sentences:				



# **Public Speaking**

Once you understand your story and how to tell it, you will want to make sure you deliver it **effectively**, which is where the importance of public speaking comes into play. This section will help you understand how to engage with your audience and provide tips on how to best speak to other people.

## **Engage your audience**

The first step in any form of public speaking is to engage your audience. If you simply start talking at someone or a group of people, they are less likely to actually listen. One of the best ways to quickly engage your audience is to relate what you are about to say to something that audience members experience in their daily lives. This is one of the main reasons it is very important to know your audience when speaking publicly

Here is a sample of this method using the YLAI Network as an example business, if the audience was business professionals in a city:

We all understand how frustrating the daily commute to work can be; you have to deal with traffic and lots of people just to get to the office. Making your way to work might be frustrating, but moving forward in your career shouldn't be. That's where the YLAI Network comes into play.

**Now it's your turn!** Think of an everyday experience—like the commute to work or getting home to cook dinner—that members of the below audience groups may have, and then tie that experience to your business in a sentence.

Audience group	Relatable everyday experience	Sentence tying the experience to your business
Business professionals who work in a city		Example: Making your way to work might be frustrating, but moving forward in your career shouldn't be! That's where the
Young (18-22) entrepreneurs in school	Example: Daily commute to work	YLAI Network comes into play.
A government official with a family and young children		

## Use effective verbal and nonverbal communication techniques

Once your audience is engaged, much of the success of your public speaking is tied to effectively communicating verbally and nonverbally. The checklist below offers tips and techniques that you should practice when speaking. If you can check all the boxes when you speak, you give your story its best chance to resonate with your audience.

Verbal Communication				
	Avoid using filler words	Using words like "umm" or "like" as filler words when you speak can make it harder to understand what you're saying, and your audience may not listen.		
		<b>Try this:</b> When you need to collect your thoughts, pause and take a breath. Pausing sounds better than "umm" or "like."		
	Vary the tone of your voice	Staying at the same tone—the speed, pitch and excitement level of your voice—can be boring for your audience and may result in them not listening.		
		<b>Try this:</b> Use the same kind of voice you would use if speaking to a parent or close friend. You want to be respectful, but it's okay to be excited about your business.		
		Emphasizing important information, like your memorable statement, is a good way to ensure that your audience will remember it after you are done speaking.		
	things	<b>Try this:</b> When saying your memorable statement, slow down and speak with passion—make your presentation dramatic, and it will leave an impact.		
Nonv	erbal Communicatio	n		
	Stand up straight	Posture is one of the most important parts of public speaking. People's brains tend to interpret bad posture as a sign that someone is not confident.		
		<b>Try this:</b> : Speak from your chest—stand up straight and pretend your voice is coming from your chest. If you slouch, your chest will point to the ground and no one will hear you. Stand up straight and make sure people hear you!		
	Use your hands	When speaking, you want to be physically animated—walking around or using hand gestures—to keep your audience engaged with what you are saying.		
		<b>Try this:</b> Don't cross your arms or lock your hands together. These gestures are not welcoming to your audience. Instead, gesture with your hands and forearms open to your audience; it will invite them into what you are saying.		
	Make eye contact	You want your speech or presentation to feel like a one-on-one conversation for each member of your audience. Making eye contact can help make this happen.		
		<b>Try this:</b> As you speak, scan your audience and make eye contact with different people. Make eye contact for 4-5 seconds per person and move on.		



## **Quick / Informal Pitches**

Now that you understand your story and how to tell it, it is time to practice pitching your business in a quick or informal setting. An informal pitch can happen anywhere at any time, so it is important to always be prepared.

Your audience for an informal pitch will typically be smaller than a formal one; most of the time it will be a one-on-one situation, like meeting a potential investor at a coffee shop or sitting next to a potential employee on an airplane.

In an informal setting it is especially important to get your point across quickly, as the person you are speaking to is likely busy and does not have to speak to you. Your **memorable statement** should be the foundation of what you say, and you should add pieces of your story that you think would be valuable to the person you are addressing.

For example, if you are speaking with someone you went to school with but have not seen in a while, it may be good to lead in to your memorable statement with a short summary of what you have been doing and how you got to the point you are at now with your business.

The activity on the following page will help you practice for a quick pitch by challenging you to tell your story in a few different scenarios.

### **Informal Pitch Practice Activity**

#### What you need

- A timer on your phone or stopwatch
- Optional: a voice or video recorder on your phone to record your practice

#### **Directions**

On the next page there are two prompts that you should complete one at a time. The goal for each prompt is to get each person to offer you a business card to set up a future chat.

- **Step 1** Read the prompt, which will tell you the scenario for your informal pitch.
- Step 2 Think about the prompt what part of your story is valuable to this person?
- **Step 3** Turn the page over so you cannot see the prompt, and take out your timer.
- **Step 4** Set your timer for the number of seconds stated in the prompt.
- **Step 5** Start the timer and begin pretend you are talking to the person in the prompt.
- **Step 6** Once your timer stops, flip the page over and follow the questions in the prompt.
- **Step 7** Repeat steps 1-6 for each prompt.

**Remember:** Practicing your pitch and being prepared is very important. Take your practices seriously! If you practice well, you will pitch well in real life.

Prompt 1				
You just stepped into an elevator with one other person in it. As the door closes, you realize you went to school with the person, whose name is David. You and David knew each other, but were not that close. David tells you that he works for a company that invests in other businesses and asks you what you are doing for work. You have 60 seconds to tell David your story and pitch your business to him before the elevator arrives at your stop.				
	t want to seem like you are trying to sell him something, focus on what is valuable for him to him interested in your business.			
What did you say?				
Why would David find what you said valuable?				
What could you improve about what you said?				
Prompt 2				
Julia and that she wo something you could	next to someone a few years younger than you. You say hello and find out her name is rks in a similar industry to your business. As she explains her work, you realize her skills are use at your business, and you want to see if she would be interested in working for your oseconds to tell Julia about yourself and your business before she gets off the bus.			
What did you say?				
Why would Julia find what you said valuable?				
What could you improve about				

what you said?



## **Formal Pitches**

Now that you have practiced telling your story informally, it is time to work on telling it in a formal setting, such as at a pitch competition, at a meeting for a funding opportunity, or at the office of a potential business partner.

This section will help you understand the best methods to prepare for and create a presentation and provide tips and recommendations for presenting and following up with your audience after a pitch.

## Formal pitch quiz

This multiple choice quiz will test your knowledge of formal pitches, including preparation, presentation and follow-up. Check the answer key on the next page to see how many questions you got right and for explanations for each answer.

<ol> <li>When preparing for a pitch, you should script what you want to say word-for-word.</li> <li>A) True</li> <li>B) False</li> </ol>	<ul> <li>2. What should you send to your audience within 24 hours after completing your pitch?</li> <li>A) Send a contract</li> <li>B) Send flowers and balloons</li> <li>C) Send a thank you note</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>3. How many times should you practice your pitch before presenting it?</li> <li>A) 1</li> <li>B) 3</li> <li>C) 10</li> <li>D) Until you feel confident you are ready</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>4. During a presentation you should always read the words on your slide to your audience.</li> <li>A) True</li> <li>B) False</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>5. What are good things to give your audience right after you finish presenting?</li> <li>A) Your business card</li> <li>B) A one-page brief about your business</li> <li>C) Money</li> <li>D) Both answers A &amp; B</li> </ul>	<ul><li>6. You should try to fit as much information as possible into your pitch.</li><li>A) True</li><li>B) False</li></ul>
<ul> <li>7. What are the two most important parts of a pitch?</li> <li>A) The beginning and the end</li> <li>B) The pictures and colors you use</li> <li>C) Your outfit and your haircut</li> <li>D) The speed of your presentation and your handshake</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>8. What should be the main focal point of your pitch?</li> <li>A) How much money your business makes</li> <li>B) How smart you are</li> <li>C) Your memorable statement</li> <li>D) Your pets</li> </ul>

# Formal pitch preparation and presentation quiz — ${\tt ANSWER}\ {\tt KEY}$

Question	Correct Answer		
When preparing for a pitch, you should script what you want to say word-for-word.	B - False Scripting what you say can make you seem less genuine and can be less engaging for your audience.  Try This: Make a list of the important points you want to make, in the order you want to make them. Practice talking to each point instead of practicing each word.		
2. What should you send to your audience within 24 hours after completing your pitch?	C - Send a thank you note  It's important to send a thank you note—typically by email—to the audience with whom you spoke. Be sure to thank people for their time and consideration of your business.		
3. How many times should you practice your pitch before presenting it?	D - Until you feel confident you're ready There is no set number of times you should practice a pitch before your presentation. Practice until you feel confident that you have mastered your presentation.  Try This: Practice giving your pitch to family members and friends as a way to see if you are ready for the real thing.		
4. During a presentation you should always read the words on your slide to your audience	<b>B - False</b> Reading off your slides usually leads to the audience losing interest in what you are talking about, so try to avoid it. Remember: making eye contact is important, and you can't do that if you are looking at the slides.		
5. What are good things to give your audience right after you finish presenting?	D - Both A & B  You should never give someone money or any other thing of value after a pitch, as this could be considered a bribe and may get you disqualified from consideration.  Try This: Leave behind your business card and a summary of your business.  This will help your audience remember you and your business and aid them in contacting you later.		
6. You should try to fit as much information as possible into your pitch	B - False Your audience will respond best to a presentation that is simple and clear.  Try This: Limit the information within your pitch to only what your audience needs to know and some supporting points. Hint: use your memorable statement.		
7. What are the two most important parts of a pitch?	A - The beginning and the end While all of the things listed are important, the most important parts of your pitch are the beginning and the end. Your audience will be most attentive during these times, and these times offer you your best chance to leave a great impression on them.		
8. What should be the main focal point of your pitch?	C - Your memorable statement  Your memorable statement should be the main takeaway for your audience after your presentation. Even if people forget everything else, they should remember your statement.		

## **Designing your presentation**

If you have access to a presentation platform like Microsoft Powerpoint, this section will help to strengthen your understanding of the best design practices to use when creating visuals for a pitch. If you don't have access to Microsoft Powerpoint, don't worry! There are other options for representing your pitch visually. Regardless, make sure that your visuals are easy for the audience to see from where they are sitting.

In the activity below, each slide could be improved from a design perspective. See if you can figure it out! Write your guess in the box next to the slide, and turn to the answer key on the next page to see if you were correct and to read an explanation about the slide.

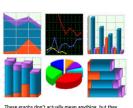
#### Slide 1: The Title Slide



#### Slide 2: The Content Slide

#### YLAI Network

The Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI) builds linkages between young leaders across the hemisphere. YLAI addresses the opportunity gap for youth, especially women, by empowering business and social entrepreneurs with the training, tools, networks and resources they need to transform their societies and contribute more fully to economic development and prosperity, security, human rights and good governance in the hemisphere.



#### Slide 3: The End Slide



#### Slide 1: The Title Slide



#### What was wrong:

Title and image did not inspire or engage the audience. There were too many words for a title slide and the picture was too small.

#### What you should do:

Start BIG. Your first impression sets the stage for your pitch. Create a simple title that captures the idea behind your business. Use a big image to immerse the audience in your pitch and slides.

#### Slide 2: The Content Slide



- Builds linkages between young leaders across the hemisphere
- Addresses the opportunity gap for youth, especially women, by empowering business and social entrepreneurs
- Helps transform their societies and contribute more fully to economic development and prosperity, security, human rights and good governance in the hemisohere



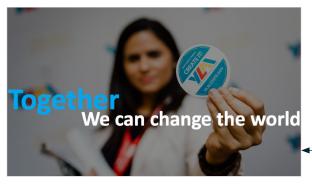
#### What was wrong:

Too much text, too many graphs, not enough space on the slide.

#### What you should do:

Less is more: use no more than three bullet points on a slide. Use images of people, as audiences will engage more with humanity than objects. Use white space on your slide to help make your points clearer.

#### Slide 3: The End Slide



#### What was wrong:

Never end a presentation with a slide that says "questions?" The most important parts of your pitch are the beginning and the end.

#### What you should do:

Come full circle—end your pitch with the central idea you started with. Use your last slide to inspire discussion with your audience, as it will likely be left on the screen after you present during questions.

## The DOs and DO NOTs of Pitching

Useful for both informal and formal pitches, this activity will help inform you about some things you should and should not do when pitching. Circle DO or DO NOT for each recommended step. See how you did by checking the answer key!

1	Do	Do Not	Have a business card with you
2	Do	Do Not	Be aggressive if someone is not interested in your business
3	Do	Do Not	Remember to mind your manners
4	Do	Do Not	Waste your audience's time
5	Do	Do Not	Be positive when speaking to your audience
6	Do	Do Not	Go really fast through your presentation

## The DOs and DO NOTs of Pitching

### **Answer Key**

## Do have a business card with you While business cards are good for formal presentations, they are a necessity for 1 informal pitches. When you are quickly introducing yourself to someone, it is important to have a business card with your company contact information to give them so they can contact you once you part ways. Do not be aggressive if someone is not interested in your business If someone does not seem to be interested in your business, that's okay. It is always 2 best to let it go and leave them with a positive impression of you as opposed to pushing too hard and leaving them with a negative impression. Do remember to mind your manners Whether you are meeting someone for the first time or the hundredth, impressions are 3 important. Using manners—opening a door for someone, complementing them, being generally polite—is a good way to make sure someone walks away from you with a good impression. Do not waste your audience's time 4 Remember that each person you speak to values his or her time as much as you value your own-so don't waste it! Do be positive when speaking to your audience 5 Positivity is always important. No one is going to want to work with or invest in someone who is very negative or mean-spirited. Do not go really fast through your presentation Even if you don't have much time to pitch, pace yourself and make sure your points 6 are able to be understood by your audience. Your audience can only absorb so much information!



## **Pitch Evaluation Rubric**

The below rubric is meant for you to evaluate yourself or to evaluate peers, as detailed below:

**Self Evaluation:** Video or voice record yourself giving your pitch presentation. Take a 15-minute break to clear your mind of what you have said, and then watch/listen to your pitch. Grade yourself using the rubric below and see where you can improve!

**Peer Evaluation:** Watch a peer practice a presentation, and grade his or her performance using the rubric below. The objective of the rubric is to help your peers improve, so be encouraging and focus on what they did well along with how they can improve.

**How to use the rubric:** When watching the pitch, determine if each element of the presenter's pitch is okay, good or excellent, and write the corresponding number in the "Rating" box for that component. Once the pitch is done, add all the numbers to see how the presenter did.

Pitch Component	1 – Needs Improvement	2 - Average	3 – Excellent	Rating
Storytelling	Presenter's thoughts were not very well organized, and the story was not easy to follow. There was no memorable statement.	Presenter's story was organized and not too difficult to follow, but there was not a clear memorable statement.	There was a clear memorable statement and the presenter's story was engaging, well-organized and easy to follow.	
Verbal Communication	Presenter did not successfully engage the audience, the tone of the presenter's voice never changed, and a lot of filler words like "umm" were used.	Presenter tried to engage the audience and use voice to emphasize key points of the presentation, but could have done so more effectively.	Presenter was very engaging from the start and the story/key points were delivered very effectively.	
Non-Verbal Communication	The presenter did not make eye contact, had bad posture, and did not really use his or her hands during the presentation.	Presenter made some eye contact and used his or her hands a little.	The presenter made eye contact, used hands, stood up straight and overall appeared very confident during the presentation.	
Pitch Effectiveness	I am not sure what the goal of the pitch was (funding, partnership, etc); it was never made clear during the pitch.	I understand the goal of the pitch, but am not fully convinced. I will have to consider it more.	The pitch had a clear goal and successfully convinced me that I should participate (partner with/fund business, etc).	
Presentation Design (if applicable)	Presentation design was okay, but the slides had too much text and bad images, and they were hard to follow.	Presentation design was good, but was a little distracting from what the presenter was saying.	Presentation design was great, each slide effectively supported what the presenter was saying in an easy-to-understand way.	
TOTAL				

### Score calculation:

**5-6:** Needs improvement **7-9:** Average **10-12:** Good **13-15:** Excellent